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# Chat with Mayor Scott Johnson, Chamber President Todd Shimkus addresses proposal for two-level parking deck on Woodlawn Avenue

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SARATOGA SPRINGS — The [Saratogian hosted an online chat](#) Thursday afternoon with Mayor Scott Johnson and Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce President Todd Shimkus to discuss parking downtown and the [proposal to build a two-story parking deck](#) on Woodlawn Avenue.

An excerpt of the chat, including questions from Saratogian staff and readers, is below:

Question from reader Cherie:

“I have spoken to many employees who work downtown who would love to have a guaranteed parking spot in a garage for a monthly contracted rate, but the garage would need to be four stories minimum to accommodate this. Why is this not a consideration?”

Chamber President Todd Shimkus:

“We had all of the downtown business organizations involved in the task force. We explored a wide range of options with respect to the size and scope of this project. In terms of time limitations, we’ll have to look at this later as it’s being built to maximize the use of this facility by visitors/customers and to see if the other decks or other solutions can be offered to downtown employees.”

Saratogian Online Editor Emily Donohue:

“Can either of you tell us who was on this task force, how it was formed, etc.?”

Mayor Scott Johnson:

“Besides myself, we had Commissioner John Franck and Supervisor Matt Veitch. We had representatives from the Special Assessment District, the chamber, SEDC, the Convention Bureau, the Downtown Business Association and the City Center. This included both the paid professionals from these organizations and many from their volunteer leadership. There were in excess of 20 volunteers on the task force who helped shape the final proposal and reviewed a lot of details.”

Donohue:

“Why wasn’t (the task force) something that was made public prior to Tuesday’s announcement?”

Johnson:

“Essentially it was an ad-hoc task force assembled to determine the potential for coming together from both the public and private sectors. The task force did address the city’s capital program committee to present the project in the inclusion of the city’s capital budget for 2012, and that meeting was open to the public in late June.”

Question from reader Maeve:

“Why in these extremely tough economic times are we making this a priority as opposed to our real infrastructure and equipment needs? Why isn’t the private sector fully paying for this? Private/public partnerships really means private gets the benefits and the public takes all the risks and liabilities. This is very rushed.”

Johnson:

“Contrary to perhaps infrastructure projects, this is a plan to generate revenue for both businesses and the city. Rather than just being an expenditure to the city, it’s a plan to ensure our downtown remains successful.”

To read the entire transcript of the chat, go to [www.saratogian.com](http://www.saratogian.com).